

## How Bar People Confronted Invaders

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**BAR KAHANI by Saeed Bhutta; pp250; Price Rs300 (hb); Publishers, Saanjh Publications, Book Street, 46/2 Mozang Road, Lahore.... E-Mail sanjhpk@yahoo.com.**

The compiler of these stories from our bars (Sandal, Kirrana, Gondal, Neeli, and Ganji) situated in the heart of the Punjab from Khanewal-Multan to Sheikhpura-Gujranwala and Sargodha, has quoted a folklorist Robert A. George's article titled "Towards understanding of storytelling".

Furthermore, it is important to make an academic distinction between social functions and social uses, for which the former are always representatives of the viewpoint of investigations, the latter always reveal the viewpoints of the participants in the storytelling events. For this reason, the social uses are, in many ways, more important than the social functions, for they provided native or in-group insights into the meaning and significance of storytelling events that the non-native or out-group investigators might have no way of observing or discovering because of his own social conditioning and cultural biases."

Now the first question is that all, these bars are part of so-called Serakistan but not a single Seraiki scholar or folklorist has so far collected the smallest part of these stories. Surprisingly, the language used by the storytellers of the bars is close to Seraiki dialects and far away from the deliberately Urduised Punjabi. It enriches the prose of southern dialect. It is more natural and spoken even in some parts of districts Sheikhpura, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Mandi Bahauddin and Hafizabad of the central Punjab.

Actually, this is the common heritage but politically inspired by the feudal lords of the South, writers, journalists and intellectuals blindly deny the every commonality which exists between Punjabi and its dialect Seraiki. That is why they care a fig to Saeed Bhutta's work in the field of stories of the Bars or the narrated events by the storytellers of the bar areas. Why the Seraiki writers feel shy of that? Another reason can be many of the main characters of the stories have names more common in the central Punjab like Cheema (Ghulam Muhammad), Chattha (Ghulam Rasool), Gondal (Mukhay Khan), Chadharr (Saleemey da), Sipra (Kunder da), Bharwana, Bhatti etc. Even Sakhi Khwas Khan associated with Sher Shah Suri belongs to the banks of the River Chenab.

Saeed Bhutta, a senior teacher at the Punjab University, has already contributed the text of the stories he heard from the prominent and much-wanted storytellers of his ancestral district Jhang-Chiniot and now this collection of 19 stories related to three bars. The points or the points of view in collecting these stories are: How the bar people faced the invaders from the West and the East and how the traditions of the bar areas have been preserved by different tribes, How the tribes fought among themselves but got united when the Pathan or Afghan invaders had tried to dishonor the women of the area. The

Afghans were never respectful to the local women; that is why we have a folk laments which begins with:

Aaya Nadir Phatti Chadar  
Babal Nevin Dhaun Kuray

The other aspect is how the Persian-oriented rulers of Delhi, Kabul, Peshawar, Lahore and Multan including the Arabs, Turks, Mughals, Afghans and in the last British were dealt by the Bar people. Only two stories relate to the British period while rest took birth in the early periods spread over some 800 years. There had always been a confrontation with the living traditions of the Bar people and all the rulers belonging to above invaders and how the Jangalis (being residents of jungle they have been called Jangali and not with hatred or taking them inferior) faced the most oppressive state powers. In that respect, popular examples are Dulla Bhatti in Mughals period and Ahmad Khan Kharel, a rebel against the British in 1857.

The Bar people have always been harshly oppressed because they were more loyal to their own set of values and economics and hated integration with the Arabic, Aryan, Afghans/Persian, Mughal and British traditions introduced through the bureaucracy of the respective ruler tribe. Bhutta claims and perhaps rightly that these stories are well embedded in the landscape and value system of the Bar areas and the powerful proof of the Punjabi prose in which almost all the dialects have been well-integrated. And the style is:

Kal Bulaindi Narad Karainda Hay Jhairay  
Dokan Bani Hay Bhairay  
Os Mari Hay Bahawal Lodi Kay Bhatti Nou  
Rat Peindi Hay Tasi Mas Khandi Hay Bairay